

**SERVE's Response  
to  
Interim Evaluation of the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education Report**

**I. Introduction**

We appreciate this opportunity to respond to the interim evaluation report for the Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE. The report seems to reflect well on the hard work of the evaluation panel and the excellent coordination of the study by the contractor. We commend both the panel and the contractor for the professional manner in which they carried out this work.

This response includes a brief introduction, followed by comments on the panel's responses to each of the eight evaluation questions and summary comments. An appendix offers staff's clarifications for factual statements in the panel's report that might be misconstrued if taken literally or out of context. All staff involved in the site visit have received the panel's report and have had the opportunity to contribute to this response.

As the overview of the report points out, the SERVE organization is just completing a redesign of its structure and operations as a result of a complete turnover in its executive staff. The executive director, John Sanders, joined SERVE August 1, 1998. He brought with him 25 years of lab leadership experience. Jean Williams became the Deputy Executive Director for Programs on February 1, 1999. Williams was previously a program leader here and is very familiar with the southeast education community. Richard Basom became the Deputy Executive Director for Planning and Development on June 1, 1999. Basom previously held leadership positions in two other regional educational laboratories. Elliott Wolf, SERVE's Director of Operations, has been with the lab since its inception in 1990. Before joining SERVE, he was a member of the program staff for the previous contractor of the southeast regional educational laboratory. This experienced executive management team is responsible for the operation of the Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE. The operation is distributed across 11

organizational units that report to the deputies. It is geographically distributed across three office locations—Atlanta, GA, Greensboro, NC (corporate headquarters on campus of UNCG), and Tallahassee, FL. The lab is guided by a 40-member Board of Directors that convenes twice a year and stays informed about lab work through document review and selective participation in lab-sponsored events. The Executive Committee of the Board meets more often (quarterly) to provide even more oversight continuity.

As the panel's report reminds, SERVE's mission is to promote and support the continuous improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. The "continuous improvement" notion is deeply imbedded in the organizational culture of SERVE. We reflect on and evaluate our activities so that we can improve our services and products to our customers. We constantly monitor the satisfaction level of our customers. In keeping with our mission, we accept with appreciation the improvement recommendations in the panel's Synthesis Report. This response, coming only two weeks after our receipt of the report, reflects only our initial reading and reflection about the report. Generally, it seems the panel's recommendations reinforce staff and board members' perceptions about the strengths and noteworthy accomplishments of this organization as well as the targeted improvement efforts underway at SERVE as a result of our recent reorganization.

In addition to the above structural changes/features of SERVE, it is important to point out some areas of emphasis in our operations. First, quality assurance is integral to SERVE's work. We are a research and development organization affiliated with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. To continue to receive the high customer satisfaction ratings the panel cites, we need to continuously review and improve our quality assurance processes. Second, SERVE extensively evaluates its program work with assistance from an internal evaluation unit led by an experienced evaluator-manager, Jerry Natkin. However, Natkin and staff determined that it would be useful henceforth to use a third-party evaluator to audit the internal work. That will be the procedure used in the future. Third, the evaluation focus of the programs in the fourth and fifth years of this contract period will include student achievement effects. The first years of the contract focused

on getting innovations up and running as intended. Now we can look productively at student achievement effects as well as factors that affect taking innovations to scale. Fourth, with three principal offices and distributed staffing, SERVE puts heavy emphasis on communications--between and among programs, offices, projects, and partner/network organizations. To that end, the internal technology unit directed by Gregory LeePow, provides state-of-the-art LAN/WAN communications infrastructure across the organization. Audio and video connections are used to keep staff in touch with each other and with the work of SERVE. Regular meetings that utilize this infrastructure are held for various staff task-groupings and for the staff as a whole. Fifth, a database that includes information about SERVE customers by state and by role group is one of the products that SERVE is committed to produce during this contract period. This database will enable SERVE to improve its understanding of program effects and of the emerging needs of its clients. These five selected features of SERVE operations provide a basis for the following commentary on the panel's report.

## **II. Implementation and Management**

### **A. To what extent is the REL doing what it was approved to do during its first three contract years?**

In its report the panel stipulates that SERVE is current on its REL contract activities/products, the strategy of having SERVE policy analysts housed in the state capitols is working as planned, collaboration and establishing networks/partnerships/alliances seems to be a strength, and in its relatively brief history as a regional educational laboratory SERVE "...has created a powerful infrastructure for wide-scale impact across its service region." To capitalize on these strengths, the panel suggests greater attention be paid to "...substantive communication and coordination/collaboration between projects, within programs, and across programs."

Our Response to the Recommendations:

We concur that communication within and across offices and staff teams is critical to the success of SERVE's organizational structure and REL program strategy. The executive

management team (which meets weekly) and the unit managers team (which meets at least quarterly) regularly review our progress in this area. In addition to these staff groups, the staff of individual programs meet regularly to review, plan, and evaluate their efforts. To assist staff teams with their communications, SERVE provides state-of-the-art communications in each of its offices—800-access to voice and video lines for staff and customers, e-mail and Website access with LAN/WAN architecture and support. In keeping with its commitment to review and improve communications between and among staff groups, the Executive Director and two Deputy Executive Directors had meetings in each of the three main offices for all staff immediately following the departure of the interim evaluation panel. The purpose of these meetings was twofold: to review the oral report of the interim evaluation team and to plan a series of staff meetings leading up to a two-day, all staff meeting in mid-December. The mid-December meeting will feature the rollout of a refined strategic plan for SERVE that benefits from consideration of improvement suggestions in the panel's report as well as the intense work of various staff groups guided by our internal evaluation data. This is just one example of the seriousness with which we view the panel's observation about the importance of cross-organizational communications, given SERVE's complex structure and large service area.

**B. To what extent is the REL using a self-monitoring process to plan and adapt activities in response to feedback and customer needs?**

SERVE takes great pride in the reputation it has built with its clients for high-quality, relevant, and responsive work. In fact, the panelists noted that SERVE's

*“... responsiveness to customers is one of the major overall strengths of this Laboratory. That is probably one reason why SERVE's work is so well received and why in its short life it has won the praise and confidence of state department officials, its Board, and its clients.”<sup>1</sup>*

While the panel cited many strengths regarding SERVE's record of responsiveness to customer needs and requests, they also pointed out opportunities for improvement and offered several recommendations. As mentioned in the introduction to this response, by the time of the site visit, SERVE had already initiated an ambitious improvement effort.

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<sup>1</sup> Italicized text indicates excerpts from panel Synthesis Report.

For the most part, we agree with the feedback from the panel and are encouraged that it confirms the direction of our plans.

Our Response to the Recommendations:

*“Institute a rigorous, external and totally independent quality assurance process, linked with increased internal QA.”*

We have already begun to address this recommendation. First, SERVE has begun to assemble a panel of external evaluators that will be involved in regularly scheduled site visits (semi annual or annual) to contribute to a continuous reflection process with SERVE staff. This panel will consist of three to five experienced evaluators who will review proposed R&D project plans, evaluation designs, and R&D findings for research rigor. In addition to this panel of evaluators, SERVE plans to contract with an external evaluation center (e.g., Western Michigan University) to routinely assess all evaluation papers/products using the *Program Evaluation Standards: How to Assess Evaluations of Educational Programs, The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

We are revising our quality assurance procedures for R&D projects to ensure more emphasis on research-based evidence of effectiveness for the literature base upon which our work stands and for the claims of effectiveness we can make about our products based upon empirical evidence. As part of this effort, our procedures require that project plans undergo a more systematic external review by content and methodological experts before approval and implementation.

*“Build ways to define and gather student and school success data at the construction phase rather than at the end of development, and/or utilization of Lab products and services. See it as a goal (with steps toward its attainment), rather than a by-product (of teacher training or other reforms).”*

The emphasis on the monitoring of student achievement at SERVE reflects a major and relatively recent shift in programmatic emphasis found in most (or all) regional laboratories. The original request for proposal (RFP) for the regional laboratory program

did not emphasize student achievement as measured through state assessments as one of the major outcome measures for which regional laboratories would be held accountable. Thus, the original technical proposal did not focus on student achievement, but on other outcome measures. Our focus on student performance, particularly as measured through state assessments, has come as a response from the field (i.e., our customers—OERI and states).

The panel correctly recognized that student achievement is a recent addition to our work. By the time of the DIR site visit, SERVE had already begun to incorporate the measurement of student impact into our research and development projects and programs. In addition, the new R&D procedures will require projects to gather and analyze student impact data. This will enable SERVE to make cogent claims of effectiveness about its R&D products based upon empirical evidence.

*“Build in critical analyses that might allow adaptations, changes, and growth of a given program to make it better or to learn how to target and adapt the existing program for particular populations.”*

The purpose of the external evaluation panel and evaluation review process is to promote more critical review of products and projects. In addition, SERVE program director meetings will continue to promote cross-program sharing of lessons learned. The SERVE’s Publications and Quality Assurance Unit already has plans to begin conducting focus groups to gather more systematic feedback from target populations on products under development. One purpose of these focus groups will be to identify how a particular product can be adapted and better targeted for other populations. External reviewers will also provide more critical input into our project work.

*“When screening materials and programs that might shape or be used in Lab projects, limit the term “research-based” to empirically supported programs and those grounded in data-driven, demonstrated student success. Add understanding of their strengths and limitations, the limitations of the literature-based knowledge, and the levels of tentativeness that are inherent in the term “research-based.” There is a need to be vigilant because of the scalability factor in the infrastructure—one must refrain from disseminating anything with less than full honesty about its potential for success. The scope of adding this level of rigor is obviously beyond the reach of current staffing and organizational mechanisms and will need to be done through an external system of*

*networks or evaluators, or through a combination of internal-external controls.”*

This recommendation serves as a paramount reminder for all SERVE staff—and should be reinforced in any good R&D organization. One way that we are striving to institutionalize this tenet of R&D at SERVE is to constantly challenge our project staff regarding the claims of effectiveness they can make about their products and the cogency of the evidence they use to make those claims. External reviewers (content and methodological) will also bolster our rigor and critical analytic capacity. Periodic seminars among staff and emphasis from the executive management team will help keep us “vigilant.”

### **III. Quality**

#### **To what extent is the REL developing high quality products and services?**

The panel's report recognized the "range of quality products and services that make up its [SERVE's] two Signature Works, the first relating to topical areas of assessment, accountability, and standards and the second to broader comprehensive school improvement thrusts." At the same time, the panel had four improvement recommendations. We comment on each of those recommendations in the following paragraphs.

Our Response to the Recommendations:

*“Expand collaboration...to enhance programmatic quality.”*

We appreciate the suggestion that the two Signature Work Areas have significant collaborative potential that has yet to be fully explored. However, we believe that as SERVE's new program structure takes hold and as the new Deputy Executive Director for Programs implements fully her management and supervisory plans, both the opportunity and incentives for the desired collaboration will be enhanced substantially. Interestingly, the program directors representing the two Signature Work Areas have a history of collaboratively developing highly valued and highly profiled SERVE events--the Regional Forum and the Seminar on Low-Performing Schools, for example. However,

we accept that as we evaluate how well our new organizational structure is working we need to look at the extent to which:

- lessons learned are shared within and across projects/programs;
- product designs are improved as a result of internal and external critiques; and,
- services to schools are more carefully targeted and integrated across projects/programs.

*"For planned interventions, reach beyond the region to ensure they reflect the most current thinking and research in the field. Use of outside content experts, not necessarily from the region (depending on the issue), is critical to ensure accuracy and timeliness of information being imparted."*

We agree it is helpful to use outside experts (researchers and practitioners) to help in planning major SERVE products and activities. Examples abound in SERVE's product portfolio of the value of such collaboration. *Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development* was a collaborative effort with David Collins, a Florida school executive, that was recognized by the National Staff Development Council as their 1998 Book of the Year. Fifteen practitioners and eight staff worked with Dr. Collins on the publication. *A Study Guide for Classroom Assessment: Linking Instruction and Assessment* co-authored by SERVE staff and NC Department of Public Instruction staff won the AERA Division H Outstanding Publication Award for 1998. It is clear from these examples that SERVE "knows how to do this." However, it is equally clear that we need to improve our procedures so that this happens routinely. The Executive Management Team will focus on this issue in the context of strengthening the research-base of our program areas. Being part of the University of North Carolina System gives staff access to outstanding expertise—national and international that we should better utilize.

*"For publications, add to an already robust QA system the best content experts in a given field to ensure the validity of information in all documents, videos, etc. bearing SERVE's name."*

The SERVE quality assurance process requires that recognized content experts review all products. As explained elsewhere, the same requirement will apply to all R&D project



designs. However, the key to implementing this requirement in a more explicit way was suggested by one of the reviewers during the panel's visit. The suggestion was to list all reviewers in the front of the publication or product. The list is a message to both customers and staff. We appreciate the suggestion and will implement it.

*"Add staff to ensure that the Lab can continue to meet its obligations under the contract, particularly in the area of Title I and CSRD activities."*

The SERVE REL program is almost fully staffed at the present time. Under additional CSRD funds recently added to the lab contract, we will hire two additional program specialists to assist with the CSRD project. Moreover, it should also be noted that program managers who need extra help to accomplish their assigned responsibilities meet with the Deputy Executive Director for Programs, if they cannot solve the problem at the program level. Care is taken at the design stage to estimate personnel needs realistically so as to be able to accomplish contract requirements on time with desired quality. However, we understand that circumstances arise in the R&D business particularly, that require accommodation. That's where the experience of SERVE's Executive Management Team members is especially important. Our increasing emphasis on building strategic partnerships to leverage additional resources is another effort to expand our impact.

#### **IV. Utility**

##### **A. To what extent are the products and services provided by the Laboratory useful to and used by customers?**

SERVE takes great pride in the reputation it has built with its customers. Indeed, we have worked hard to gain the trust from our customers in the field—and we protect that trust jealously. There is never a question that any given product or service will be useful and used by the field. For if there is any question, that product or service never sees the light of day. Development work continues until all questions about utility and usefulness have been answered. Quality assurance begins up front in the planning process and continues until the customer is satisfied and is using the product.

*“...carry its best products to a national audience.”*

As mentioned in earlier responses, our refined quality assurance processes and procedures are designed to further enhance our ability to produce useful, high quality, research-based products and services for our customers. As pointed out by the panel, our major challenge is to expand our reputation from the region to the nation.

SERVE will continue to emphasize utility and use of its products across the region. In addition, the SERVE’s Publications and Quality Assurance Unit will work with program directors to expand the scope of dissemination plans to encompass the nation, while ensuring that the region continues to receive priority attention. The publications unit will also explore ways to expand the use of other media for product/service delivery (e.g., video, Internet, and CD-ROM).

**B. To what extent is the REL focused on customer needs?**

*“Examine the extent to which there is minority representation in all its programs, and quickly correct identified deficiencies.”*

While the panel praised SERVE’s delivery infrastructure, it was disappointed in SERVE’s ability to “disaggregate the data” to determine how well it is serving/reaching various constituencies. The fundamental issue is not the quality of SERVE’s products/services, but who is receiving them. It is an issue of data collection and analysis.

Our response to the recommendations:

SERVE also recognized this need and is nearing completion of its redesigned internal customer data base—the new version will allow more disaggregation of data and will address the issues raised by the panel. SERVE management will analyze these new data and take appropriate action based on findings as recommended by the panel.

## V. Outcomes and Impact

### A. To what extent is the REL's work contributing to improved student success, particularly in intensive implementation sites?

*“SERVE needs to have program effectiveness demonstrated in terms of student impact, including academic outcomes. More pre-post testing needs to be done to document outcomes that can be clearly linked to the program being implemented. This would best be achieved by having this incorporated in the design of the program so that training would be consciously directed toward achieving the best possible student outcomes. Specifically, SERVE needs to shift gears in its professional development strategy, including that for alternative assessments, to focus more on student work.”*

The notion of student achievement as a “bottom line” is a relatively recent phenomenon in regional educational laboratories. The entire technical proposal was guided by an RFP that required outcome measures but in no way specified that the outcome measures focus on student performance. However, the rules of the game have changed, and a true “bottom line” has emerged—one to which all educational organizations are being held accountable. Student achievement/success is indeed that bottom line.

SERVE has conducted one study (as reported to panelists) that examines the extent to which SERVE's work with intensive sites may be resulting in significant increases in student achievement as compared with state averages (as controls). While this study is exploratory—to be used as the foundation for more qualitative studies—it does highlight SERVE's commitment to apply a rigorous research design to determine if SERVE's work is resulting in student impact. It is important to note that this initial student impact study was begun a year ago—it is also important to emphasize that this study was in response to this emerging “bottom-line” issue. This study represents only the beginning of our strategy to contribute to more systematic R&D documentation of how SERVE's efforts are improving student success.

As part of SERVE's revised R&D process, all major R&D projects will be required to develop a systematic plan for how they will document (e.g., pre-post test and matched

control designs) and demonstrate impact on student performance. Increased emphasis from the executive management team and program directors will also reinforce the shift toward student work/impact. In addition, increased external reviews from both content and methodological experts will help maintain focus. Ultimately, all of these actions will foster an atmosphere in which SERVE staff at all levels will address improved student performance as a major outcome.

**B. To what extent does the Laboratory assist states and localities to implement comprehensive school improvement strategies?**

It is gratifying that the panel recognized the “dedication” and success of SERVE efforts in the area of comprehensive school improvement. While we have done so much in this area, there is always so much more to do. And the resources available are never enough to do all that is needed. In this context, hard choices must be made. The panel recognized the good work and raised concerns about how to deepen the research and spread the implementation.

Our Response to the Recommendations:

*“For its various client groups, SERVE should develop comprehensive research summaries related to their various activities and show how these activities contribute to school reform. Other activities in Labs and centers around the U.S. should be referenced if relevant. Increased collaboration with researchers could help to improve study design and ensure effective outcomes. In addition, working with well-known researchers can lend credibility to SERVE work and help to ensure that it gets published. SERVE staff needs to write some articles about their well-done projects and seek collaborators or other pilot sites in the region and outside of the region (working with the relevant Lab).”*

SERVE has been moving in the direction of offering more research summaries and highlighting school improvement activities and products developed by other laboratories and centers. For example, the latest issue of *The Vision* included a summary of characteristics of improving schools in Florida and an overview of a nationally acclaimed program for infant/toddler caregivers (developed by a “sister” laboratory). The previous issue highlighted “Family Connections,” an early child development program derived

from twenty years of solid/rigorous R&D work—also from another regional laboratory. While the direction is set, there is a need to continue to expand the efforts to publish and disseminate research-based findings.

As SERVE involves more external expertise and perspectives in the review of its R&D and Field Service efforts and through ever-expanding collaborative partnerships, our staff will continue to be exposed to opportunities to publish the results of their programs and disseminate research-based “best” practices. SERVE’s leadership is committed to increasing the visibility of our excellent staff and the results of their work.

Recommendation:

*“The panel is not advocating a formula approach to resource allocation, but does suggest that the Lab think about how its programs and resources are distributed among the several states, so there is more visibility throughout the region.*

*More attention should be given to the purposeful selection of participating school and district sites to ensure variation in key demographic and contextual factors within SERVE implementation sites. It is clear that in many cases schools and districts were selected because of their individual requests. One advantage of a more proactive recruitment effort within identified political and demographic categories is that this could enhance understanding of those interventions which work and those which do not under varying local circumstances.”*

Until recently, the selection of R&D sites (and field service sites as well) have been based on the interest and commitment of partners (schools, districts, teachers, etc.). The assumption has been, that without voluntary participation, little would occur anyway—so SERVE rarely imposed rigid selection criteria on its sites. However, with increased desire to isolate treatment impacts from R&D interventions, more attention is being placed upon research design issues to include sampling criteria and controls for external validity. Because field services are not constrained by these research design issues, SERVE will examine the distribution of services across the region.

Recommendation:

*“Given the extent of poverty and isolation in the Delta, the panel hopes SERVE would take the lead in reviving collaborations of the last contract and support the panel in its plan to encourage Secretary Riley to forge a multi-agency effort there.”*

SERVE will support the recommendation of the panel to forge a multi-agency effort in the Delta. There are supportive efforts under way that can help inform this proposed development effort. For instance, AEL has proposed a major research study of the “Black Belt” —certainly related to the poverty and low educational expectations of the Delta.

**C. To what extent has the REL made progress in establishing a regional and national reputation in its specialty area?**

The panel's comments in this regard are both sensitive and poignant:

*“The program is not sufficiently strong to be a true specialty area yet of the Lab, though the foundation is being laid. There is a sense that it is still searching for its identity and direction--probably because of staff turnover and vacancies in the first years of the contract. Even so, the Lab began to make its mark. With a full-time director and a full complement of staff, the Lab should be able to better develop its specialty and achieve its place. Once this is begun, SERVE should strive to do more seminal work, worth of being published in national refereed journals.”*

SERVE has started down the path toward filling the panel's recommendation. First, we now have a full-time director, Catherine Scott-Little, on board in the specialty area and a full complement of staff. Second, we are also pleased that more than half of the other REL's are now involved in our cross-laboratory early childhood project. Third, Governor Jim Hunt of North Carolina has offered his considerable help in planning a national SERVE specialty area event. Governor Hunt has offered to take the lead in getting the signatures of the governors of the other SERVE states on a letter of invitation to a national conference on early childhood education policy. (The North Carolina "Smart Start" program, much emulated by states in the Southeast, is a high personal priority of

Governor Hunt.) The co-signed letter (recall that the governors are ex-officio members of the SERVE Board of Directors) will be sent to the governors of the other 44 states and appropriate officials of the District of Columbia. It will invite the governors and DC officials to send state teams to a conference to be held October 23, 1999, in Atlanta. The conference is to feature keynote presentations by Georgia Governor Roy Barnes and at least one of the other Southeast-region governors reviewing the challenges encountered in establishing their respective state early childhood initiatives. The keynotes would be followed by panel discussions with national early childhood experts (both research and practice experts) commenting on what works and what doesn't (and why) in early childhood policy and program development. A SERVE publication, based on the conference would follow. Fourth, a meeting is scheduled for executives from the National Center of Early Development and Learning to meet with SERVE counterparts to rekindle that relationship and to build some synergy between the work of the two organizations.

## **VI. Summary Comments**

The panel's summary begins with the assertion that "SERVE's primary strength is the quality and commitment of its staff." We appreciate the panel's complementary observation and will continue to press ahead--planfully and collaboratively—to achieve our mission for the benefit of the 6.6 million preK-12 students in this region.

As we review the summary section of the panel's report, there are two additional concerns expressed that deserve further comment: our work in the Mississippi Delta Region and the suggestion that we take the panel's concern about obtaining richer demographic data to the cross-lab evaluators' group.

During the last contract period AEL and SEDL participated with SERVE in a collaborative project in the Mississippi Delta. It was a very small initiative in which we evaluated how a NASA-funded computer lab where teachers could come and be trained

produced improved teaching. During the same contract period. However, SERVE was also conducting other projects in the schools of the Delta Region.

During the current contract period, the new SERVE leadership team has worked with a joint committee of officials from Delta State University, the Delta school superintendents association, local business association, and SEA officials including the SERVE policy analyst to develop a set of new initiatives based on state legislative priorities. These initiatives have involved working through complex social, political, and education issues and establishing agreements with all parties about their roles and responsibilities. SERVE's Betty Fry seems to have won the trust of the various parties involved and is proceeding with the development of project plans. We will incorporate into those plans the opportunity for a joint effort of the three labs should the additional resources proposed by the panel become available. We will continue to work with Mississippi State Superintendent Richard Thompson (an active member of the SERVE Board of Directors, currently on the Executive Committee of the Board) and his staff to determine how the lab can maximize the value of its work in the schools of the Delta region.

Concerning the second recommendation, SERVE's Jerry Natkin who represents the lab on the cross-lab evaluators' group will take the panel's suggestion forward. We will report the result of that effort in a future quarterly report.

For the amen of this response we simply want to assure the panel that their report is valued by all of the staff here at SERVE and that the recommendations in the report will continue to be considered and acted on as opportunities arise for us to do so.



**Clarifications of Selected Statements  
from  
Interim Evaluation of SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education  
Synthesis Report**

The following statements have been selected from the Synthesis Report for clarification:

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Page Number</b>	<b>SERVE Clarification</b>
1. SERVE, the regional education Laboratory (REL), is a part of the umbrella organization SERVE, Inc. a non-profit corporation.	Pg. 2, Para. 2	The regional educational laboratory (REL) at SERVE, is part of a SERVE umbrella organization comprised of two entities, the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG), the fiscal agent and prime contractor for the REL, and SERVE, Inc., a 501(C)3 non-profit organization.
2. The SERVE Board of Directors, which meets twice annually and has conference calls at least quarterly, has 40 members six from each state plus three former teachers of the year, and a representative of the Native American Education Council.	Pg. 3, Para. 2	The SERVE Board of Directors, which meets twice annually, has 40 members, six members from each of its six state delegations plus three former Teachers of the Year, and a representative of the Native American Education Council. The Board of Directors is guided by a seven member Executive Committee that convenes quarterly, twice at scheduled board meetings, and twice via conference call, and is composed of six board members and the board chairperson.

3. For example, the Senior Project which has been adopted and dispersed in a number of schools and districts, is not undergoing rigorous scrutiny in relation to student test score changes. Nor is an evaluative effort underway to identify distinguishing characteristics and issues of students who are successful in completing the project versus those who fail or do poorly.

Pg. 11, Para. 2

The Senior Project began as a "scale-up" activity of the lab. Several North Carolina schools discovered the Senior Project and, after reviewing it, decided the project would address the needs of their students. They requested SERVE's assistance in implementing and evaluating the project. The schools that implemented the project found that it met their needs and told others about it. As a result, there are now 35 schools in five of SERVE's states using the Senior Project. Twenty of these schools are participating in a SERVE-initiated study that is investigating how student achievement is related to the skills taught through the Senior Project. At the summer meeting of the Senior Project Network (held after the panel's visit), three school sites took up SERVE's challenge that the schools participate in a longitudinal study of the graduates of the project. Also, SERVE evaluators are working with the Senior Project staff to design a study of the project's effect on students' state achievement test scores. This study would be implemented in Senior Project schools where the project is "vertically integrated," that is, implemented as part of the four-year high school curriculum, not just as part of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade curriculum.

4. A dissemination strategy devised jointly by program personnel with the publication unit needs to be developed for REL products. Information should reach the maximum audience in the region and beyond, and in a variety of ways. Publications should generate presentations in schools, workshops, regional and national conferences, and translate into offerings in journals, magazines, and TV to heighten public and professional awareness. This recommendation applies to all program areas, but particularly to the specialty topic of early childhood education.

Pg. 26, Para. 3

Charles Ahearn who directs the Publications and Quality Assurance Unit, has had a process in place since the beginning of this contract period to document product dissemination plans. There are plans on file for all standard publications series of the lab: *The Vision* newsletter, policy briefs, *Sharing Success*, *Hot Topics*, and R&D reports.

All new/unique publications from the programs require a concept plan that is reviewed by staff and outside experts, as appropriate. A dissemination plan is prepared and submitted in standard form to the Publications and Quality Assurance Unit while the product is being developed. This plan is also on file.

Many of SERVE's publications are training products and are used in workshops and other training events. A SERVE Products and Publications Catalog is available in paper form and is on the lab website. This catalog is regularly disseminated through SERVE events and displays at meetings.